



TRIETSCH

## STUDY GUIDE & DAILY READINGS

Sunday, April 26, 2009

Fearless (*Week 1 of 3*)

### Fear

#### **Matthew 14:22-27**

*Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."*

*The Word from the Bible, New International Version*

#### **Fearless**

For the next three weeks we will focus on the story of Jesus calling Peter to walk on water. Each week, we will deal with a different aspect of the story.

This week we deal with the fear of the disciples who were literally terrified as they encountered stormy seas. What is the source of their fear? They have watched Jesus perform miracles and heal the sick. How can we apply the power of Christ when we are afraid in order to live a fearless life.

In week two, we will deal with the courage of Peter. Peter is one of the early leaders of the church who was martyred for his faith. While we see this fearless Peter in some circumstances, we also know the Peter who is rebuked by Jesus as well as the Peter who loses his faith in denying Jesus the night of the crucifixion. Peter is flawed, and yet Jesus calls to him, empowers him and uses him for Christ's glory. Is there a Peter inside each of us?

In the final week in this series, we will look at the grace of Christ that reaches out to Peter as his faith fails. In the touch of Jesus, Peter is restored and joins Jesus in the boat with the rest of the disciples as the winds and storm ceases. The courage of Peter was not enough to overcome his fears. Only the presence and touch of Christ was enough.

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#### **Walking on the Water**

Jesus' authority extends not only to the sin and sickness of the world, but to the forces of nature as well. We saw his power over nature when he created bread to feed the multitudes, and we see it again in his walking on water. God's power rules over the whole of the creation, not merely the world of humans.

The account of the storm in Matthew is full of vivid detail about **the boat...beaten by the waves** and **the disciples, who were terrified**. Jesus' response to the terrified disciples that night — **"Take heart. It is I; have no fear,"** is just as meaningful to today's community of faith. The intention of the story is made clear in verse 33, where Jesus is acclaimed as the **Son of God**.

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## ***Fear in the Bible***

The concept of fear in the Bible is related to a wide range of emotions, extending from simple apprehensiveness to utter terror or dread. Typically, human fear as it is described in the Bible is caused by the suspicion of an impending peril, known or unknown. Theologically, fear is illustrated in such expressions as “the fear of Yahweh” or “the fear of God.” In such cases, the reference is to an emotional experience which is connected to the perception or the awareness of the holy. This fear as a response to God produces the reactions of repulsion, attraction, fascination, awe, reverence, love, trust, faith, worship and adoration.

The word “*fear*” and its synonyms (reverence, awe, dismay, dread, distress, trouble, terror, horror, etc.) occur several hundred times in the English versions of the Old Testament and more than a hundred times in the New Testament. They are used to render into English more than a score of Hebrew words and their derivatives, and at least three Greek words and their derivatives.

In the New Testament, of the these three Greek words with their associated forms, one noun and one verb are most commonly used. The verb that is translated “to be afraid,” “to be struck with fear,” “to be seized with alarm,” is the most common verb used in the New Testament. One example of this verb is found in Matthew 10:31, in which Jesus instructs the disciples not to fear the coming trials associated with following him.

The most common noun is translated “fear” or “awe” and occasionally “reverence” or “respect.” We see this word in Romans 13:7, where Paul speaks of showing “respect and honor” to those who deserve it. In Mark 4:41, the gospel writer uses the noun that is typically translated “awe” to describe the disciples response to Jesus as he calms the storm.

It will be noted that the idea of anxiety in the Bible seems to be rather sharply distinguished from that of fear. Fear is associated with God, with an attached sense of awe, wonder and reverence. Anxiety is associated with the cares of the world.

## ***Fear and Joy***

An altogether different fear seizes the disciples when they confront holiness in the person of Jesus. The worldly fear of danger in a storm is soothed, but a sacred awe takes its place as the disciples discern the power of their Lord (Mark 4:37-41; Matt. 14:26-27; Mark 5:15, 33).

As in the Old Testament, this feeling is not incompatible with elation, trust and certainty. And thus the women at the empty tomb, aware of the victory of Christ over death, “***departed quickly...with fear and great joy***” (Matt. 28:8; Mark 16:8). The growth of the church in Jerusalem yields a similar consequence of fear and joy (Acts 2:43). There is no contradiction among the early Christians, between the experience of joy and the sense of theological fear.

## ***Notes***

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# Daily Readings

***Please note: This week we begin our study of the book of Acts. Read and reread each passage to get a sense of the total dependence these early followers gave to the Holy Spirit.***

**Monday, April 27 – Read Acts 1:1-11.** The book of Acts is written by Luke. He begins this work by attaching it to his previous work. In verse 6, Luke shares with us the ascension of Jesus including the final instructions as Jesus is taken into heaven. Compare Jesus' words recorded in verse 8 with those at the end of Matthew, Mark and John. How are they different? Are you willing to follow these final instructions of Jesus?

**Tuesday, April 28 – Read Acts 1:12-26.** The disciples are waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit that Jesus has promised them. They wait patiently, sharing together in worship, prayer and fellowship. How are you connected to the people of God? Do you share in prayer and fellowship with other believers?

**Wednesday, April 29 – Read Acts 2:1-13.** The day of Pentecost is about the communication of the gospel. Not only do the disciples speak in the language of the many nations that are present, but the visitors from these nations hear clearly what is being said. The miracle of Pentecost involves both speaking as well as hearing. In our area, we are not limited by language in sharing the gospel. What are the ways we are limited in communicating the gospel of Christ? What are the new ways of communicating so that those who have not heard the "full gospel" can hear?

**Thursday, April 30 – Read Acts 2:14-47.** After Peter's sermon, three thousand were converted. Can you count the number of words in this short sermon? How many souls per word were saved? Why don't we see these kind of results in our church today? Read verse 42 again. Underline the spiritual discipline of the church. Can you follow this discipline?

**Friday, May 1 – Read Acts 3:1-26.** This is Peter's second sermon and the healing of the lame man. Verse 6 is a very well known passage, "***Silver and gold have I none, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk.***" Our society longs for the things of silver and gold. What do you need right now that can not be bought with the coins of this world?